

4. Customs /Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

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N a. Religious rites

563 According to religious rules, the Moslems are supposed to
779 pray five times daily (sunrise, noon, afternoon, sunset and
782 midnight), facing in the direction of Mecca. Few of the Chinese
Moslems besides the Mullahs and Ahungs adhere strictly, but
pray only once or twice a day. To be valid, prayers should be
performed in the mosque, but those who find it impossible to go
to the mosques may pray wherever they are. The call to prayer
(adhan) is made by the Ahung, or religious leader, and the be-
[793] lievers join in saying the adhan. Daily noon prayer is popular,
and the Friday service is the most fully attended.

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N Public worship cannot be performed by fewer than four per-
sons. Women may not attend the mosques where the men pray.
[562] In some places, women have their own mosques and women
Ahung to direct the prayers and Friday services. Women always
worship as individuals and not as a congregation, though there
may be a number of women gathered together.

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N The Moslems must be clean when they attend any religious
563 ceremony. Hands and face must be washed, and bathing before
779 worship is common. For this reason all mosques of importance
782 have bathing places annexed. The Moslem becomes unclean by
783 touching such objects as dishes containing pork or any meat not
killed according to ritual, pigs, dogs, wine or excrement.

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N The thirty-day fast of Ramadan is fairly strictly observed.
563 During this period one is not to eat between sunrise and sunset,
779 and such things as smoking, drinking and sexual contact are also
782 forbidden. In many places, a messenger goes about the Moslem
783 quarters calling out the times for observing or breaking the fast,
lest someone oversleep or fail to prepare and eat the necessary
[203] food before daybreak. The end of the fast is celebrated by a
feast.

The aged, ill, insane, travelers, women who are pregnant,
menstruating or nursing, persons doing heavy labor or whose
lives are in danger are excused from the fast, but if or when
they are able they must make up for it. The purpose of the fast
is to help the believers maintain pure and pious lives. Fasting
is considered meritorious at other times too, except on Friday,
Saturday and Sunday.

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N b. Naming

563 Within seven days after the birth of a child, he must be given
553 a Koranic name, or Ching-ming (religious name). For this oc-
852 casion a feast is prepared, and the poor are fed. If the child is a
male and the family wealthy enough, two sheep are killed for the
occasion. If the child is a girl, only one sheep is killed. To
arrive at the name, the father holds the child with its face
[788] toward Mecca and repeats a prayer in one ear of the child, then

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the other. Then he turns over any seven pages of the Koran, and from the seventh word of the seventh line of the seventh page, takes the name. When a male child reaches his seventh birthday he is circumcised and taught to worship.

c. Marriage

The marriage customs of the Chinese Moslems, with the exception of the wedding ceremony itself, are the same as those of the Chinese. The bridegroom is accompanied by his father to the bride's home, where the ceremony is performed. The Ahung reads from the Koran, in a manner similar to that of the Christian marriage service, then asks the couple whether they agree to the union.

In Koko Nor (Chinghai) the bride is customarily covered with a piece of red cloth after the ceremony, then lifted by her uncle or brother into the sedan chair and sent to the groom's home. Upon arriving there she is lifted out by her relatives. She wears a veil on the first day and hides in her chamber while relatives and guests sing, dance and feast in celebration. On the second day she receives guests, bowing to each one. Meanwhile the guests present their gifts and congratulations.

Exogamic marriage is permissible to the extent that a man may marry a Han Chinese woman, who is supposed by marriage to become a Moslem. Before such a marriage the girl must submit to elaborate purification ceremonies to cleanse her from the defilement of her own home. The Ahung officiates at the wedding and the Chinese custom of worshipping heaven and earth is not performed.

d. Funeral and burial

The funeral customs of the Chinese Moslems are more distinct from those of the Chinese. The dead body is washed ceremoniously by religious leaders from the mosque, who take the garments of the deceased for themselves. The body is then swathed in white bandages, each limb being bandaged separately. Correct performance of this rite is very important. Well-to-do people sprinkle incense on the cloth used for bandages. The wealthy also place large quantities of musk and camphor in the grave. The corpse is placed upon a board under which are the bands necessary for lowering it into the grave, then covered with a bottomless coffin for the trip to the cemetery. The coffin is never interred. The corpse is placed in the grave with head to the north, feet to the south and face toward Mecca.

When the deceased is a woman, only members of the family may look on when the coffin is removed, and only blood relatives, preferably sons, may descend into the grave to arrange the body.

There are elaborate instructions concerning death. Rituals include the recitation of prayers as death approaches, the

/The New Uighurs/

563 slow-witted fellow. A woman who is quick-witted, energetic and
847 above average in looks can exchange a useless or uncongenial
mate for a better one with no difficulty. A New Uighur beauty
can count her past fancies by her successive husbands, just as a
horse-racing enthusiast in America dates his past life by Derby
winners.

563 d. Ceremony of birth

843 The expected arrival of a child is kept a secret from all but
844 the husband, as it is believed that publicity may make the birth
difficult or even dangerous. The husband secretly summons the
midwife, who utters some words during the delivery to drive
away evil spirits and protect the life of the newborn.

563 On the second or third day after the birth of the child, the
846 parents are visited by close friends and relatives. All bring
gifts to the baby. Men traditionally hope for male offspring,
women for daughters. A newborn boy generally receives a cow,
horse or sheep from his grandfather.

563 When the father summons a Mullah to name the baby, it is
852 the occasion for showing the child to close friends and relatives.
When the baby is twenty days old, he gets his first bath. He is
[553] washed again after forty days, when his head is shaved for the
[851] first time. For the shaving, a few boys from five to ten years of
[302] age are invited, and one boy of gentle character whose parents
are both living is selected to perform the gesture of shaving.
The actual shaving is done by a man.

e. Funeral and burial

563 New Uighur ceremonies regarding death are more elaborate
764 than the Kirghiz ritual, though both peoples are of the same re-
ligious faith. When death occurs, relatives and close friends of
the family are informed and invited to take part in the prayers
and share the grief.

563 The corpse is left in the room where death occurred, and no
764 one is allowed to touch it. When the day of the funeral is set,
793 three mullahs are summoned to perform the ablution rituals.
They undress the body and place it on folded doors. One pours
water on the body, the second washes it and the third turns the
body. If the deceased is a woman, the ablution rites are per-
formed by an old religious woman. During the rites, no one but
the mullahs may be present in the room.

When the body is cleansed, the mullahs dress it in three
white cotton shirts. The inside shirt is short and has an opening
in the front. The second is of the same style, but reaches to the
knees. The shroud, which has an opening for the face, is placed
over the shirts and tied at each end, leaving only the face un-
covered.

Then the mullahs carry the body on a felt into another room
and place it on a bed, and family members, relatives and friends